## Remarks at a Reception for Leaders of African Nations in New York City

*September 7, 2000*

Well, first of all, let me thank Congressman Jefferson. This reception was his idea, and I thank him for his work on it—and all the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus who helped him who are detained in Washington for votes this afternoon. I want to thank all the leaders of African nations who are here and the diplomats and the business leaders who have come.

There's a simple purpose to this event. We want to say that Africa matters to America. Or as Reverend Jackson, my Special Envoy, was just saying, we don't see Africa as a continent of debtor nations; we see Africa as a credit bank for America's future, an opportunity for a real and genuine and lasting partnership.

I just got back from Nigeria and Tanzania, where I was with some of you in Arusha. And that trip reminded me again of all the positive things that are out there to be built in the future. It also enabled me to say something no American President had ever been able to say: I was glad to go to Africa for the second time.

But I think, and I hope and pray, that no future American President will ever not say that, that we will take it for granted that we should have a broad, comprehensive, in-depth, consistent relationship with Africa. We have a shared interest in making sure that the people of Africa seize their opportunities and work with us to build a common future.

Of course, the governments of Africa have to lay the foundations—the rule of law, a good climate for investment, open markets, and making national investments that broaden the economic base and provide benefits to ordinary people. These things will work.

Last year the world's fastest growing economy was Mozambique, and Botswana was second. Nigeria turned a fiscal debt into a surplus. So that will work. But we must also reach out through our Export-Import Bank, our Overseas Private Investment Corporation, our Trade and Development Agency to encourage more American investment in Africa.

We also should encourage the regional trade blocs to unite smaller economies into bigger economic units in more attractive markets. And as Bill Jefferson said, we're going to do our best to make the most of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, the trade act which the Congress passed earlier this year. When we fully implement it, Africa will have much greater access to American markets than any region in the world has to American markets outside North America, and I'm very proud of that.

We are also working to bridge some of the other divides, helping 20 African countries connect to the Internet, training more than 1,500 government and civic institutions to use it. We know we have to do more in communications in rural Africa. There are some rural areas where there is less than one phone line for every 500 inhabitants.

We don't want a digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world, but neither do we want a digital divide to develop within Africa itself, between cities that are connected and villages that are left out. So we will continue to do what we can for trade and technology. We know that is not enough.

A year ago I announced that we would support a global effort on debt relief and that we would completely write off the debts of as many as 27 African nations. Uganda has already used savings on debt payments to double its primary school enrollment—double. Senegal has used theirs to hire 2,000 teachers. Mozambique has used theirs to buy much-needed medicines.

I asked Congressman Jefferson to go back after meeting with all these leaders to influence the Congress to give us the $435 million we need this year to fully fund our debt relief program this year and to continue to extend debt relief to other deserving countries who will take the savings and invest it in their people and their future.

I also believe we should do more to promote education in Africa. I have launched a $300 million initiative, which I hope will be nothing more than a pilot program, to work with developing countries to provide free meals—nutritious breakfasts or lunches in school—so that parents will be encouraged to send 9 million more boys and girls to

school in countries that desperately need to increase school enrollment.

We estimate that if our friends around the world will join us and if we can cooperate with countries to deliver the food in an appropriate way and to make sure we don't interrupt local farm markets—we don't want to hurt local farmers anywhere—we estimate that for about $4 billion worldwide, we could provide a nutritious meal in school to every child in every developing country in the entire world. That could change the face of the future for many African countries and many countries in Asia and Latin America, as well.

Finally, we're trying to do more to fight infectious diseases, especially AIDS. I want to thank Sandy Thurman, my AIDS Coordinator, who is here, for all the work she and others in my administration have done to try to help Americans realize that this is a global crisis. Earlier this year, we declared that AIDS was a national security issue for America.

There were some people who made fun of me when I did that—some people who said, "What's the President doing? How can AIDS be a national security crisis?" When you think about all the democracies we want to see do well in the 21st century and all the people who will lose their freedom because they can't even keep their people alive, it is quite clear that AIDS is, in fact, a national security challenge for the United States that we have to do more to meet.

Now, what are we doing in America? We, again—Bill Jefferson is here—we're trying to get Congress to approve a $1 billion vaccine tax credit to give tax incentives to our big companies to develop vaccines that they otherwise would not develop because they know most of the people who need the medicine are not able to pay for it. So we are trying to cut the cost of developing it so they will still have a financial incentive to do it, and then, if they develop them, we'll find a way to pay for it and distribute it.

Even as we insist, however, on vaccine research and research for a cure, we should remember that AIDS is 100 percent preventable. We need to do more with education and prevention programs and to break the silence. We have a chance to take on this human challenge together.

One of the most moving experiences I have had as President—and I have been through a lot of interesting and profoundly emotional experiences the last 8 years—but one of the most moving things that's happened to me happened when we were just in Nigeria, and President Obasanjo and I went to this event in an auditorium with a lot of people to talk about what they were doing in Nigeria to try to prevent AIDS. So there were two speakers. The first speaker is a beautiful 16-year-old Nigerian girl who gets up and talks about what she's doing as a peer counselor to talk to her contemporaries to keep the children out of trouble. That was pretty good.

Then this young man gets up. I think he must have been about 30. And he talked about how he fell in love with a woman who was HIV positive and how his family and her family didn't want them to get married, and about how their priest didn't want them to marry, and they were deeply religious people, and how their love was so strong, they finally convinced the priest that they ought to get married. And he finally convinced the parents that it was all right, and so they did. And then he became HIV positive. And then his wife became pregnant. And he had already lost one job because he was HIV positive, and he was desperate to find the money to get the medicine for his wife so that there could be a chance that his child would be born without the virus. And finally, he got the money. His wife took the medicine. The baby was born without the virus, and he basically was affirming the fact that he was glad he followed his heart, even though he contracted the virus. He was glad that he and his wife had had a child who was free of HIV, and he wanted the world to do more to get rid of this illness.

And then the President of Nigeria brought his wife up on stage and embraced her in front of hundreds of people, and it was all over the press in Nigeria the next day. It changed the whole thinking of a nation about how to approach this disease, to treat the disease as the enemy but not the people who are gripped with it. It was an amazing encounter.

So I just say to all of you, we're committed for the long run. We want to take on the

great human challenges. We want to take on the great political challenges. There are some things that you will have to do, but I believe America is moving inexorably to be a much better partner over the long run for Africa. It is one of the things that I was determined to do when I became President. I am more determined today than I was. And I am more convinced today that it is not an act of charity. It is an act of enlightened self-interest for the world that we should be building together.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Jesse Jackson, the President's Special Envoy to Africa; President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria; Tayo Akimuwagun, peer educator, National Center for Women Development (Nigeria); and John Ibekwe, president, Nigerian Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS.

## Remarks to the United Nations Security Council in New York City

*September 7, 2000*

Thank you very much. Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, members of the Security Council. We come together in this historic session to discuss the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace and security. I thank President Konare for the moment of silence for the U.N. workers who died in West Timor yesterday and ask the Indonesian authorities to bring those responsible to justice, to disarm and disband the militias, and to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of those continuing to work on humanitarian goals there.

Today I would like to focus my peacekeeping remarks on Africa, where prosperity and freedom have advanced but where conflict still holds back progress. I can't help noting that this historic meeting in this historic Chamber is led by a President and a Secretary-General who are both outstanding Africans. Africans' achievements and the United Nations' strengths are evident. Mozambique and Namibia are just two success stories.

But we asked the United Nations to act under increasingly complex conditions. We see it in Sierra Leone, where U.N. actions saved lives but could not preserve the peace. Now we're working to strengthen the mission. In the Horn of Africa, U.N. peacekeepers will monitor the separation of forces so recently engaged in brutal combat. In Congo, civil strife still threatens the lives of thousands of people, and warring parties prevent the U.N. from implementing its mandate.

We must do more to equip the United Nations to do what we ask it to do. They need to be able to be peacekeepers who can be rapidly deployed, properly trained and equipped, able to project credible force. That, of course, is the thrust of the Secretary-General's report on peacekeeping reform. The United States strongly supports that report. It should be the goal of our assistance for West African forces that are now going into Sierra Leone.

Let me also say a word, however, beyond peacekeeping. It seems to me that both for Africa and the world, we will be forced increasingly to define security more broadly. The United Nations was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. War kills massively, crosses borders, destabilizes whole regions. Today, we face other problems that kill massively, cross borders, and destabilize whole regions.

A quarter of all the deaths on the planet now are caused by infectious diseases like malaria, TB, and AIDS. Because of AIDS alone, life expectancy in some African nations is plummeting by as much as 30 years. Without aggressive prevention, the epicenter of the epidemic likely will move to Asia by 2010 with very rapid growth rates also in the new independent states.

The affected nations must do more on prevention, but the rest of us must do more, too, not just with AIDS but also with malaria and TB. We must invest in the basics, clean water, safe food, good sanitation, health education. We must make sure that the advances in science work for all people.

The United States is investing $2 billion a year in AIDS research, including $210 million for an AIDS vaccine. And I have asked our Congress to give a tax credit of $1 billion to speed the development in the private sector of vaccines against AIDS, malaria, and